

## § 219.23

and the variability inherent in complex systems.

(b) When appropriate and practicable and consistent with applicable law, the responsible official should provide for independent, scientific peer reviews of the use of science in planning. Independent, scientific peer reviews are conducted using generally accepted scientific practices that do not allow individuals to participate in the peer reviews of documents they authored or co-authored.

### § 219.23 The role of science in assessments, analyses, and monitoring.

(a) *Broad-scale assessments.* If the Forest Service is leading a broad-scale assessment, the assessment must be led by a Chief Scientist selected by the Deputy Chief of Research and Development. When appropriate and practicable, a responsible official may provide for independent, scientific peer review of the findings and conclusions originating from a broad-scale assessment. Independent, scientific peer review may be provided by scientists from the Forest Service, other federal, state, or tribal agencies, or other institutions.

(b) *Local analyses.* Though not required, a responsible official may include scientists in the development or technical reviews of local analyses and field reviews of the design and selection of subsequent site-specific actions.

(c) *Monitoring.* (1) The responsible official must include scientists in the design and evaluation of monitoring strategies. Additionally, the responsible official must provide for an independent, scientific peer review of plan monitoring on at least a biennial basis to validate adherence to appropriate protocols and methods in collecting and processing of monitoring samples and to validate that data are summarized and interpreted properly.

(2) When appropriate and practicable, the responsible official should include scientists in the review of monitoring data and analytical results to determine trends relative to ecological, economic, or social sustainability.

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### § 219.24 Science consistency evaluations.

(a) The responsible official must ensure that plan amendments and revisions are consistent with the best available science. The responsible official may use a science advisory board (§ 219.25) to assist in determining whether information gathered, evaluations conducted, or analyses and conclusions reached in the planning process are consistent with the best available science. If the responsible official decides to use a science advisory board, the board and the responsible official are to jointly establish criteria for the science advisory board and the responsible official to use in reviewing the consistency of proposed plan amendments and revisions with the best available science.

(b) The science advisory board is responsible for organizing and conducting a scientific consistency evaluation to determine the following:

(1) If relevant scientific (ecological, social, or economic) information has been considered by the responsible official in a manner consistent with current scientific understanding at the appropriate scales;

(2) If uncertainty of knowledge has been recognized, acknowledged, and adequately documented; and

(3) If the level of risk in achievement of sustainability is acknowledged and adequately documented by the responsible official.

(c) If substantial disagreement among members of the science advisory board or between the science advisory board and the responsible official is identified during a science consistency evaluation, a summary of such disagreement should be noted in the appropriate environmental documentation within Forest Service NEPA procedures.

### § 219.25 Science advisory boards.

(a) *National science advisory board.* The Forest Service Deputy Chief for Research and Development must establish, convene, and chair a science advisory board to provide scientific advice on issues identified by the Chief of the Forest Service. Board membership